

## [Mr. Botsford is standing on his "verandy"]

[W15115?]

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Friday, Feb. 10 ' [?] [??] Mr. Botsford is standing on his [?] "verandy" as I walk up the muddy sidewalk leading to his home. The sidewalks of Litchfield street, except for an extremely short stretch, assume in winter time precisely the same [?] virginal earthiness which characterized them fifty years ago when the street was one of out town's infant thoroughfares, and when the mud [?] reaches its most impassable state, residents add a top layer of ashes in the fond expectation that the mass will coagulate into desirable firmness. It never does. Today the driving rain has thickened the ooze and it sticks [??] to shoes and rubbers with the [???] consistency of paste. But when I attempt to remove my rubbers on reaching the [?] "verandy" Mr. Botsford genially bids me come in.

"Don't leave 'em out there, they'll be cold when you go to put 'em on" he says. "Come in, come in. I [?] ain't got no woman here to fuss [?] if there's a little mud on the kitchen floor."

"I was just out gettin' a breath of fresh air," he continues as he sits down in his big chair by the kitchen stove. "I didn't hardly expect company today."

I express the fear that my visits may [?] take on the aspect of intrusions. "Hell no," says Mr. Botsford. "Glad to have you. If you can [?] stand it, I can. Helps pass away the time for me. I like to remember all this old stuff, and talk about it. Don't know how much good it is to you, but if you can use any of it, you're welcome to it. I just don't want nothing personal about me used in print, [?] that's all. [???]"

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"See that truck [?] pulled up in front of the house across the street? Ernie Woods is movin' out. You know his mother died last week, so him and his wife are movin' in with the old man. And I lose another 2 neighbor. Last one that moved out was Harry Blakeslee, next door here. He lived here a good many years, Harry did. You ever see that pet monkey of his? Zip, they called it. Used to have it in the [?] store window up town once in a while.

"He was a cute little cuss. They let him have the run of the place in summer time. He'd climb the trees and poles in the summer time and they'd have a hell of a time gettin' him down. But he never went very far away. He knew better than that. Harry got him from a salesman, The lad was [a?] in the store one time and Harry made the remark that he'd like to have a monkey. Not long afterwards he got a phone call from Waterbury, said there was somethin' down to the freight station for him. He went down, and [ther?] there was the monkey.

"Yessir I kinda miss Harry. I see him the other day, and he asked me could I tell him anything about the [Blakeslees?] bein' in the clock [businss?] business around here. That was before Seth Thomas' time. They had a little place up on the Torrington road where they used to make clocks, then they'd set out and peddle 'em on foot all through the state. Two brothers, they was, Edward and Abner, or some such names. These two [Bake?] Blakeslee women down here are descended from 'em, and I guess Harry is too, some way or another."

Mr. Botsford rises to attend to the fire, and in so doing he knocks from a hook by the stove a small contrivance of thick wire. He picks it up and hands it to me for inspection, explaining that he uses it for picking up hot pans of ashes. [?] It is a simple enough gadget, though it is constructed of one piece and certainly required ingenuity in the making. "Made it myself," says Mr. Botsford, "over at the shop. Lord, I made any number of things like that in my spare time. I could do most anything [wuz?] 3 with wire."

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He brings out from the recesses of his pantry numerous other devices, some of them [?] rust covered and [?] obviously out of use for some time. "I made all these," Mr. Botsford says. He holds up a long, [?] scissors like tool which [and?] instead of blades ends in strong circles of steel. With a milk bottle he [?] demonstrates it purpose. "Used to use this for takin' fruit jars out of hot water, cannin' time, [?] The women thought it was great.

"And this here," (a watchmaker's eyeglass with cleverly adjusted wire holder) "I made this one time for my own [?] use and it was so much better than the others that would never stay on, the company made a couple of hundred of them. Of course there ain't nothin' to these things, anybody could make 'em, but still you had to put a little thought into 'em I made [?] 'em [?] all out of one piece. I made a lot of them for the other [bos?] boys, too.

"And tools. Look here." He rummages in a drawer, brings out a small metal box. Opened, it discloses an [?] imposing array of [??] shining steel tools of various sizes. Mr. Botsford takes them out, one by one, explaining their use, the difficulties he encountered in making them. He is particularly proud of a small vise and a pair of calipers with "male and female" [?] prongs.

"When I went to work in the shop, you had to know how to do things," he says. "That's why Seth Thomas help used to be in demand in all the other clock shops. They knew how to put a [?] clock together, most of them. Now'days, you can't make your own tools [?] like that. Everything is made down in the machine room, and you got to order.

"A feller can't learn nothin' about tools no more, [?] workin' in the shop. Used to be, if you had a job to do, you could take time out and make the tools just the way you wanted them, and that way, it [eliminats?] 4 eliminated a lot of confusion. Now'days you order from the machine room, and you might get what you want, and you might not. When it comes to satisfactory tools, it's best to make 'em [?] yourself if you know anything about it.

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"It's [to?] easy to make mistakes, as Tom Lyons said when he was startin' out int in the undertakin' business. You ever hear the story about him and the corpse? It went all around town, and some people swear it's the truth, I don't know. [??] Years ago there was an old feller lived down to Reynolds Bridge named Joe Buck. Joe used to [drink?] drink like a fish, he was soused and helpless about five days out of seven.

"Well, one cold winter night, Tom was sittin' by his livin' room stove when somebody knocked at the door and told him Joe had got run over by the Winsted train. Tom hustled out and hitched up his horse and got hold of Paddy Bates who used to help him, and the two of them drove over to [?] the depot. They found Joe up the track a ways, cold as a mackerel, but no [?] marks on him. They couldn't figure that out, but it was too cold a night to stand around, so they dumped him in the basket and started takin' him home.

"They got about half way down to the village when they heard the goddamndest groan from the basket. Jumped [?] clear off the seats, both of 'em did, they say, and let the horse go. He stopped down the road a piece, and they went down, and there was Joe climbin' out as limber as you please. Joe didn't recognize who 'twas brought him home, he just said thanks and staggered off down the road. That's the story they told on Tom, now I don't know how much truth they is in it. "

There [?] is the sound of footsteps on the "verandy" and Mr. Botsford gets up to investigate. "Paper boy," he says, opening the door and retrieving the Waterbury paper from his doormat. "Didn't think it was that late. You goin' are you? Look here, the pope is dead, paper says. 5 "And more news on the Waterbury trial. You think them fellers will get put in jail where they belong? Yessir, plenty of news in the paper tonight. Well, see you again, boy, see you again."